

WASHINGTON, D. C., SUNDAY, JULY 3, 1910.

WEST POINT IN THE EARLY SIXTIES--A RETROSPECT

Gen. Farley Gives Interesting Views of Military Academy in Civil War Times.

Recently The Washington Herald had occasion to review a book entitled "Three Rivers," by Brig. Gen. J. P. Farley, of Washington, D. C. This book was so filled with readable reminiscences of that period, so critical in our history, the period of the civil war, that we felt sure that Gen. Farley would have much to say of that time that would be of interest to the present generation. The present articles are made up of new material, combined with some essays already published and some extracts from his latest book, "Three Rivers," published by the Neale Publishing Company and illustrated, in colors, by Gen. Farley himself.

By GEN. J. P. FARLEY, U. S. A.

Gen. A. S. Webb, president emeritus, of the College of the City of New York, in his review of "Three Rivers," by Gen. J. P. Farley, U. S. A., has this to say respecting the Hudson River section of the book:

"The Hudson." This part of the book is the most attractive to the general reader. The author's heart was in the work, since he speaks of his beloved alma mater, the theme being "West Point and Art in the Army" (some of this chapter has been published in the Military Service Institution Journal). One becomes engrossed in his recital of his experiences, his graphic tribute to the men he knew so well and lived with for a long time. It is all gracefully and feelingly told, and he draws the reader to him by his able treatment of a subject particularly his own.

The writer has read this chapter twice and feels like saying to Gen. Farley, "Your work is to be enjoyed by other than West Point men, it is so full of good feeling, so full of loving appreciation of the work of others, in fact, it is so well and lived with for a long time. It is all gracefully and feelingly told, and he draws the reader to him by his able treatment of a subject particularly his own.

Suddenly you feel a passion rising in your soul. A military passion that no one can control. You hear of West Point cadets, where they turn guard warriors on.

Still you stop and hesitate, on this point there's a doubt.

When you do in that night, you mutter, prate, and prattle.

Think you hear a uniform, see drums, and wear a battle!

Dream of bullet-buzz, plumes, of ladies' smiles and fun.

Waking in the morning, you're off to Washington.

CADET HORACE PORTER (1824).

The precepts enunciated by Horace Porter are indeed in verse here, find practical application.

Pierce Had Big Stick.

Whenever I hear the term, "big stick," associated as it always is with the White House, I wonder if it could possibly be the same one delivered by me into the hands of President Franklin Pierce.

In the month of March, of the year 1852, a mission fruitful in beneficent results. It may be safely said that upon that occasion I gulped into the presence of the Executive of the nation mounted upon a "family hobby."

The cane, for such it was (a very unique stick), was carved throughout its knotty length in grotesque shapes, and upon its silver head two names were inscribed, B. Pierce and J. Farley, both captains of the old corps of artillery (1812-21), boon companions and lifelong friends; the donor, the President's father, and the receiver, the grandfather of the youthful aspirant for military honors.

The lad had in previous years been on good terms with the White House and enjoyed the privilege of exercising "Old Whittier" (Zachary Taylor's war horse), and had figured extensively on the broadened furniture of the President's mansion on occasions where the two Presidents, Tyler and Polk, had entertained the children of the city. The old adage is here reversed, pleasure first and business afterward; since the visit of the latter date was one strictly for business, and the youth had been instructed when he should meet the President to say: "My father desires me to present you this cane," and he was admonished to lay it on good and strong. Days and nights preceding this visit were largely given over to the wielding of the stick, and the delivery of the presentation phrase.

The supreme moment for action had at last arrived. How the lad got to the White House he never knew, but he well remembers that in the grand reception of his lesson as he followed the curb he narrowly escaped a cane presentation to the lackey of the Executive Mansion.

He was ushered into the East Room, second floor, filled with a host of office seekers, who always infest the city of Washington at the outset of a new administration, and in this case it cannot be said that our young hero for military honors, should not be so classed.

Mental Vision Seen.

The time of waiting dragged heavily with the lad and as he stood before the south window overlooking the flats and marshes of the Potomac, there rose in mental vision, from out the mist which hung over the river, a "banner" extending from bank to bank, and "bearing this strange device," "My Father Desires Me to Present You This Cane."

Drifting aimlessly about the room for what appeared an interminable age, repeating to himself the phrase of speech now stereotyped in the gray matter of his brain, chilled with apprehension, and filled with misgivings, the lad finally brought up before an open fire where one other, a probable aspirant for office, had taken refuge.

This gentleman seemed to make him self very much at home, and, standing

with his back to the fire, lifted his coat-tails (swallow-tails, if I may be allowed exactness of detail), and warmed up to the occasion. "My little man," he said, "whose son are you, and how much snow and ice have you taken in during this inclement season?" A few moments after he left the room, but before going parted the young gentleman on the shoulders and bade him "good-by."

The crisis was indeed near at hand, for shortly after this, Sidney Webster (possibly the gentleman may recall as he indeed was the President of the United States himself. He appeared to be absorbed in the note that had been handed him, and which conveyed full information about the cane.

As he approached the cane bearer (at this time must dub him), he took a sudden step forward and waving all ceremony, seizing the cane with both hands, held it upraised before him, and with eyes diffused with tears and voice choked with emotion, exclaimed, "Why that's my father's cane."

After this followed a period of patient waiting, and a term of service on the United States Coast Survey, but in the spring of 1857, the year in which President Pierce's administration closed, an official document was handed me by my father, himself a graduate of the United States Military Academy (1823), designating me as a cadet at that institution.

West Point jokes, as all should understand, are natives of an exquisite territory, and the writer, who in this section of the city two principal hand fire engines, the "Union" and the "Franklin," and the boys of eight years, and upward, "ran" the engine, the "Gumballs," with the "Union" and the "Franklin" Oh, ye mothers! the perils of football of the present days are as naught to the brickbat contest of our day.

A skirmish of this kind, in the year of the President's mansion, resulted in the death of a "Gumball," and this had a determining influence in making at least one more soldier. After following this to the grave, the writer, who in this section of the city two principal hand fire engines, the "Union" and the "Franklin," and the boys of eight years, and upward, "ran" the engine, the "Gumballs," with the "Union" and the "Franklin" Oh, ye mothers! the perils of football of the present days are as naught to the brickbat contest of our day.

Small attempts at apology for such small attempts as here follow, seems not one best used by leaving the apology unsaid.

And so it came about, that early in the month of June, 1857, the writer reported to the post adjutant at West Point, and with two others, was assigned a room in "D" Company division, cadet barracks, vacated in those days by the "old cadets" in favor of the newcomers, the "plebes."

We were directed by two very courteous young gentlemen to the angle of barracks, and a certain room was pointed out as the one containing our furniture.

The greater portion of the morning was consumed in the transfer of this furniture, and just as we were enjoying a breathing spell, an officer, presumably of the tactical department, entered and reproved us severely, directing us to remove our furniture from the room.

It is thought that, if the officer had in this case adopted the tactics of Gen. Grant during the civil war, the real offense might have come to grief and the poor plebes have escaped from the undoing of the work they had done. As the story runs, several Northern soldiers were talking together one day just before the advance on Corinth. A tall raw

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We had been well supplied with brooms, dusters, washbasins, buckets, blankets, etc., but charges for these articles were always entered upon our passbooks. This time, and for the first time, something was to be had for nothing--an allowance.

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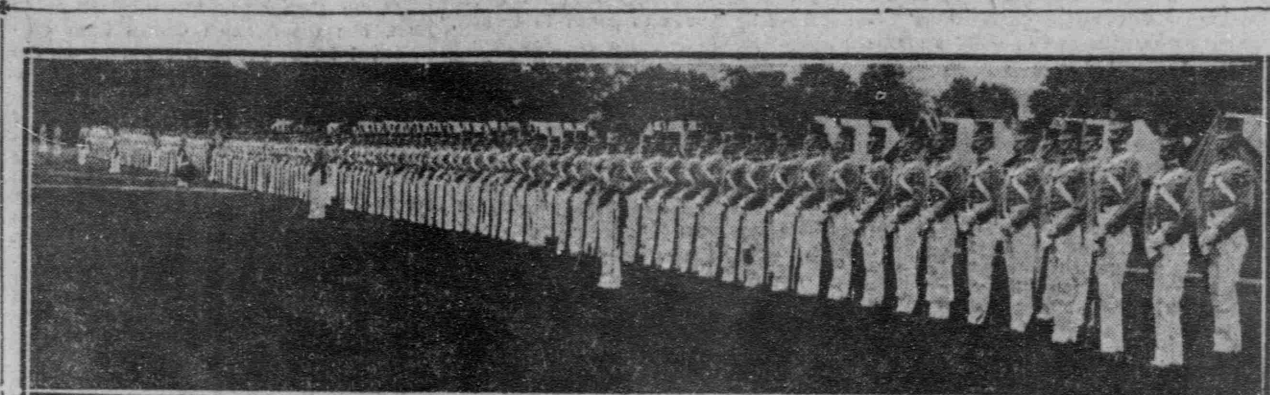
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Evening Parade at West Point--Retreat.

recruit stepped up to them with a bundle of soiled clothes in his hand.

"Do you know where I could get this washing done?" he asked.

Two of the group were practical jokers. A bright thought flashed into their heads, and, as the sequel shows, unfortunately found expression.

"Oh, yes, we know! Just go up there with your bundle," pointing to the headquarters of Gen. Grant; "you will see a short, stout man"--describing the general--"who does washing. Take your bundle to him."

The recruit thanked them and walked off in the direction indicated.

He gained entrance to headquarters, and stood in the general's presence.

"What can I do for you?" said Gen. Grant.

"I was directed here by a couple of soldiers. They told me that you did washing, and I have a bundle here."

Wanted the Jokers.

Gen. Grant probably enjoyed the situation, but his imperturbable face did not relax. He simply asked the question: "Could you identify those men again?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, you shall have the chance."

Turning to an orderly, he directed him to call a guard, go with the recruit to where the jokers were standing ready to enjoy his discomfiture, and let him identify them.

"Take the men to the guardhouse, give them this man's bundle of clothing and make them wash it thoroughly. See that the work is well done."

The general was obeyed to the letter.

To add to the complexity of things that day, just after "call to quarters" in the evening, the sentinel tapped on our door and called out "All right!"

The reply not being satisfactory to him, he opened the door and inquired if any one had answered "All right!"

"I did, sir."

"Who is room orderly?" "He is, sir."

"Why did he not answer?" "Because I did, sir."

"Why did you answer?" "I don't know, sir."

"I forgot, sir." "Well, young man, don't ever forget again."

"Now," said the sentinel, "I inquire, is it all right in this room?"

"All right, sir," responded the room orderly.

"What is all right?" "Everything is all right, sir."

"Is that basin all right?" "No, sir."

"Is that pillow all right?" "No, sir."

"Is that blanket all right?" "No, sir."

"Do you not know, young man," the sentinel said, "that the rules and articles of war require that you should be tried by court-martial and dismissed from the service for trifling with a sentinel on post in this manner? In time of war the sentence would be death."

We have been asked if this "rubbing-it-in" on the plebes is usual at the Military Academy; and the party of inquiring mind remarks that, if so, it must have an amazingly good effect. We are confirmed by his observation in an idea previously entertained that the chronicling of such episodes, "small beer" though they be, is as well calculated as anything can be, to give a true idea of actual life at West Point.

March Into Camp.

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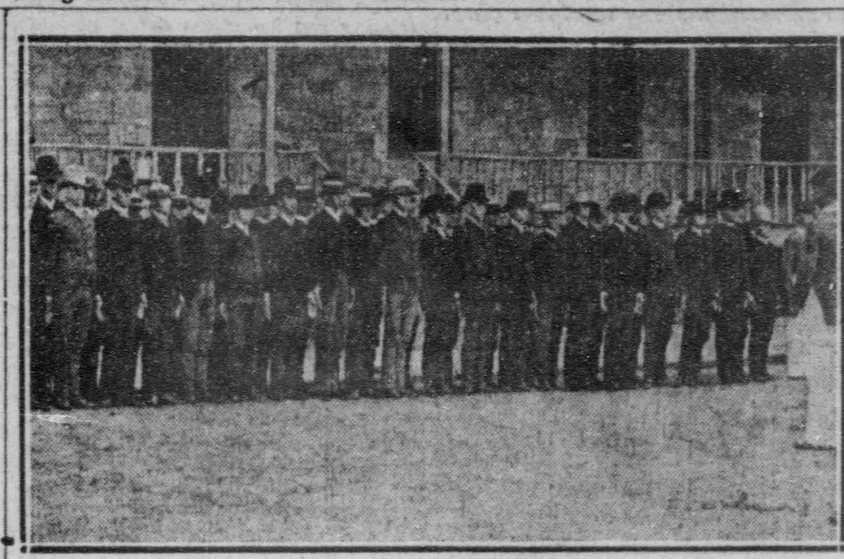
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Candidates at West Point.

ed hour, and besieged the quartermaster's tent in vain.

There was evidently something "in the wind" which the "plebes" neither understood nor appreciated; the sentinel, however, was not so easily deceived.

"No, no, no," he said, "no right whatever within the gate of a military post? He has parted with his right for a consideration--that, namely, or being protected in the enjoyment of his property by the military. In one instance it appeared that the property in question was a number of golf shoes and the sentinel's business to see that no member of the club slipped away with two pairs of shoes, one pair on his feet and the other in his pocket, leaving a rival to go over the course in his stocking feet."

All are not however ignorant of the uses and advantages of a sentinel. Even a verdant youth of but eight summers sometimes knows better than the man or larger experience. We (an officer and a youth), are passing a sentinel's post--down comes the sentinel with a rattling present; the salute is returned. "Uncle, the little fellow inquires, 'doesn't that make you feel very proud?'"

True Story of Sentinel.

Numerous stories are told of poor mortals dressed up in soldier's clothes and vested for the time being with authority to command kings and potentates should they trespass upon the sentinel's prerogatives, and here is a true story.

A son of Erin, representing as he did, for this occasion, one of the afore-said class, was serving as a member of the guard at an army post and for the first time. To all challenges the answer came promptly: "Friend," or "Friends with the countersign." All went smoothly and according to formula until a young couple happened along, quite unused to being addressed in this summary way. No answer to the challenge. Again, "Who goes there?" Still no answer. "Answer, answer!" yelled the sentinel--"Say something! Say something! Say something, but for God's sake say something!"

But how far away from West Point are we wandering and nothing as yet said relative to the details of the guard system at that post.

In the first place, there is issued each day a small triangular form of note, the "countersign" and "parole" for the night; usually the name of some battle or campaign, and sometimes that of some hero of the day, as parole. The story as we have it comes down in regular sequence of years and shows how the ladies sometimes possess themselves of family secrets. Lieut. Washington, a tactical officer serving at the Academy, "fair, fat, and forty-five," met a party of young ladies "on the old north road." If one were a plebe and a plebe class can say with any degree of truth after a summer camp spent in the manner described, that he has not seen active service.

Now all this may seem superfluous, but the great Gen. Winfield Scott said before election (and it killed him politically): "Everything is done with a view to soup" ("A hasty plate of soup" is the father's business had it), and these stories are told with any degree of truth after a summer camp spent in the manner described, that he has not seen active service.

Following the posting of regular sentinels, orders and instructions of a purposefully complicated character were given. To receive "grand rounds," how to receive a body of cavalry if friends, and how to receive them if enemies; which latter method consisted in fleeing from one's post, firing one's piece and calling out in retreat: "Turn out the guard! turn out the guard! Body of the enemy's cavalry!"

From the pilot-house and wharves, the steamboat arrived on his post in like manner and in all seriousness the officers of the guard gave instructions as to how it should be received. If at night, the sentry should be required "to dismount from the pilot-house and wharves, and take the countersign." If at another hour, a different method of receiving the craft was prescribed.

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